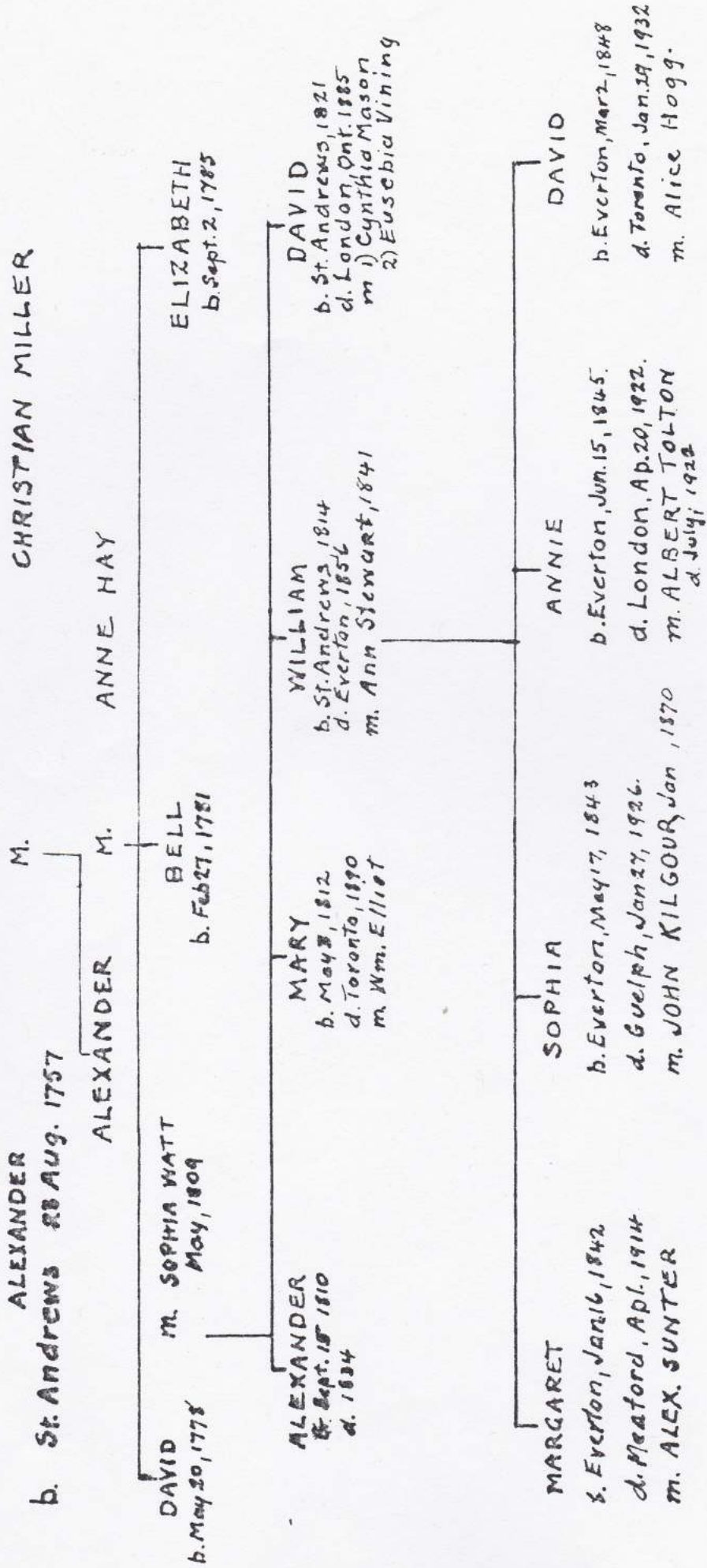


THE OLIPHANTS

Edith Kilgour Bar

OLIPHANT





In the little cemetery at Everton six of my great grandparents lie buried, the Oliphants, the Stewarts, the Kilgours and the Mortons.

The first of these ancestors to come to this country were the Oliphants.

The name Oliphant is an ancient one of Norman origin, originally spelled Olifard, and the first one is supposed to have "come over" with William the Conqueror and settled in Northamptonshire. David Olifard, the first of this family on record, served with King Stephen against Queen Maud and having saved the life of David I of Scotland received from him grants of land in Scotland and had the honour of being the earliest justiciary on record in Scotland.

There is a stirring plaque in Stirling Castle to Sir William Oliphant who defended the castle with 300 men against the might of Edward I. He died in 1329 and his tombstone is still preserved in Aberdalgy churchyard. His son, Sir Walter, married a daughter of King Bruce I and it is through the latter that the Oliphants (some of them) claim descent from Scottish kings and back of them in a Royal line as far back as Ruth and Boaz!! One line descends through a series of Davids, Williams and Walters ending in a number of Sir Lawrences, the last of whom was British Ambassador to Belgium when the last war broke out and was taken prisoner by the Germans.

Somewhere down the line there was a lairdship of Gask, an estate in Perthshire. This was confiscated in the '45 as the Oliphants were all Stuart folk, and is now a ruin and the title later went into abeyance. It became a matter of litigation and the suit was won by the daughter of Dr. Oliphant of Toronto who became Lady Oliphant of Gask. She was known as such till she died in Toronto about 1930(?) but like most of the other Oliphants we have known she had no funds to back up her name.

Just where our family of Oliphants came into the picture I do not know for we have no records back of my great great great grandfather. He was, according to the old Parochial Register of St. Andrews, one Alexander Oliphant, married to Christian Miller. They had one son, Alexander, born in St. Andrews in 1757, who married Anne Hay in Boarshill (near St. Andrews). They had a son, David, born 20th May 1778 (baptized 24.5.1778). The third entry is of David Oliphant, a merchant in St. Andrews married on May 12, 1809 to Sophia Watt. These last mentioned are my great grandparents. The inscription on the tombstone of the latter in Everton reads, "In memory of David Oliphant died 15th of Jan., 1845, aged 63 years." This would have made him born in 1782. The explanation of this discrepancy in dates is, I think, as follows. As I remember the original Oliphant tombstone it was lying flat on the ground broken and almost indecipherable. My sister had it removed and the inscription copied onto a new stone. The date of my great grandfather's death was probably so defaced that a mistake was made and 1845 put for 1841. In a copy I made of the original stone I have written 1841, and this is certainly the correct date.



If my great grandfather was a merchant in St. Andrews, our branch of the Oliphants had travelled a long distance from Royalty and the Bruce. He travelled a step farther by becoming a follower of the Maldane brothers, those two remarkable men of wealth and aristocratic lineage who devoted their lives to religious reform and regeneration in Scotland, then at a very low spiritual ebb.

David Oliphant was one of a group to start or join a small Baptist chapel four miles out of St. Andrews. In an obituary notice of his son David in 1855 it was stated that his father was a Baptist minister in his native city. This, I think, is an obvious mistake, but it is certain that he was connected with this Baptist chapel as it was there he met Sophia Watt and it may well be that he presided there sufficiently often to qualify as a minister of sorts. Shades of the chapel stretch a long way back in our history on every side and we should certainly be, if anything, good dissenters.

No photograph remains of this David Oliphant but he is said to have been a fine, handsome and superior man. His wife said it was he who gave the children their good looks. Aunt Mary Elliot was said to have looked like him and inherited his fine nose and mouth.

As a merchant (of shoes, I believe) he must have prospered sufficiently to finance his trip to America. He suffered from some asthmatic condition and his doctor recommended a sea voyage. He came out with his oldest son, Alexander, and settled in Dundas leaving his wife and three other children to follow later.

This is all I know of the Scottish background of the Oliphants.



David Oliphant's wife, Sophia Watt, seems to have come from a more prosperous family than the Oliphants. There is a persistent legend in the family that she was closely related to James Watt the inventor of the steam engine, but I can find no trace of this in any records I have.

I have a mass of material on the Watts which Miss Janie Elliot sent to my sister, gleaned from old letters sent to her grandmother, Sophia Watt, and from reminiscences of her mother, Mary O. Elliot. Since writing this I have seen copies of these letters in the possession of Mr. Willie Elliot who kindly loaned them to me and allowed me to make copies.

Sophia Watt, my great grandmother, seems to have been a woman of great character who impressed herself on most of Eramosa and Erin and whose namesakes are still to be found scattered through that countryside. She was born in London March 26, 1783, the daughter of William Watt and Jane Bond, an English woman (the only blot apparently on an otherwise purely Scottish ancestry).

On the Bond side, not much is known except that her great grandfather was one Percival Bond and that she had two aunts, Frances and Phyllis, the latter of whom, unmarried, left her a legacy. Jane Bond, her mother, was first married to John Powis and secondly to William Watt.

On the Watt side there is much more material as there seems to have been a good deal of correspondence back and forth. The first Watt of whom we have record is William Watt of St. Andrews and his wife Agnes Wallace. They had a son William born 17th August, 1759. The latter married in London "Jean" Bond, an English woman, and they had a son James born on March 26, 1786 and registered in St. Andrews, and a daughter Sophia born March 26, 1783 in London. After the birth of Sophia they evidently returned to St. Andrews to live.

Sophia Watt had an aunt Isabella (Taddie) who died in 1841 and left her a legacy. She also had legacies from a Mrs. Bond and two other aunts, Anne Turner and Phyllis Bond. She had at least two uncles, one of whom was Thomas Watt who was wealthy and travelled in the West Indies. There he married the daughter of the Governor of Guadeloupe, and afterwards returned to Edinburgh where they lived "in style" in Claremont Crescent. Having some financial reverses through an unfortunate investment, they moved to St. Hiliers, Jersey, to economize. He seems to have recouped his fortunes, for they returned to Claremont Crescent. He had a West Indian valet who slept on a mat at his master's door, but the bleak climate (combined with a draughty hall?) did not agree with him and he died, deeply regretted by all.



This Thomas Watt had several children. A daughter, Isabella, married a Mr. Anderson of Jamaica, W.I. The son, Edward, lived in Trinidad. Both these visited their father in Jersey. Another son, William, also lived in Trinidad and a son, Henry, went as A.D.C. to the governor of Domenica. His father wrote to Sophia Watt that this son had been given a handsome establishment and later accepted a judgeship. We may have a troupe of dusky cousins in the West Indies by this time!

Thomas Watt left his seal and coat of arms of Watt of Fife to his nephew Henry David, brother of Sophia Watt, and after the latter's death the large seal and a smaller seal belonging to H.D. Watt's son Wallace, a banker in London, was sent by a neighbour to Sophia Watt Oliphant in Canada. He wrote: "Since we have known him (H.D. Watt) he has lost his wife and five children. After his son Wallace's death he never rallied. Mr. Watt was a clever accomplished man and was regarded for his talents and abilities, but was consumptive. He had a very comfortable house and a nice garden with bees." This latter was written by E. Measur(?) of Deeping, St. James, Lincolnshire, England, July 28, 1853.

The seals and all the other Watt mementos descended from Sophia Watt Oliphant to her daughter Mary Elliot and from her to her daughter, Cynthia Jane.

Sophia Watt Oliphant's last relative left in St. Andrews was, prophetically enough, a James Bain, bachelor and librarian at St. Andrews University till the time of his death. He was highly thought of and a memorial was raised to his memory.

And now we come to the redoubtable Sophia Watt herself. From the beginning she showed signs of a strong character, for having come under the influence of the Haldanes, she left the established church and attached herself to the Baptist chapel four miles out of St. Andrews, thereby incurring the strong disapproval of her family. A pathetic (!) story has come down about her mother's forbidding the servants to wait up or leave any supper for her on Sunday evenings after her four mile walk from chapel at the ungodly hour of 7.30 and of the poor thing going supperless to bed. Evidently midnight snacks from the pantry were unknown to the young folk of those days or, probably, great great grandmother carried off the larder keys to bed with her.

It was at this chapel the independent Sophia, aged 26, must have met the handsome David Oliphant, aged 31, and married him on August 13, 1809. Her family was so incensed at the double disgrace of marrying into chapel and into trade that they "cut her off", at least temporarily.

David and Sophia Oliphant had four children who grew to maturity - Alexander born 1810, Mary born 1812, William born 1814 and David born 1821. All were born in St. Andrews.



David was evidently not very strong and suffered from asthma. He was advised to try an ocean voyage and a new climate for his health and in 1822 he and his oldest son, Alexander, came to Canada and settled in Dundas. He brought with him dozens of white shirts beautifully double stitched and finely made by his daughter Mary, not then ten years old. There was also in Mrs. Scott's possession a beautiful sampler made by her mother (Mary Oliphant) before she was eight. There couldn't have been many idle moments in her young life.

Sophia Oliphant and the three younger children remained behind to care for Sophia's mother who was ill and was supposed not to have long to live (and who must have by this time been very glad to forgive her daughter). She must have been made of stern durable stuff for it was five long years before the Oliphant family were all reunited in Canada. Sophia came out with all her mother's household goods and was "well provided with everything".

David, in the meanwhile, had bought or built a substantial house in Dundas with an acre of land. Why they left the comfort of Dundas for the backwoods of Eramosa we do not know, but few families could have been less fitted for the rough pioneering they undertook.

They took up 200 acres of land between what is now Everton and the Guelph road. Knowing nothing of land they made a poor choice. It was low, badly drained and very stony. It was hard work for the amateur farmers.

A letter from Josiah Royce, father of the famous philosopher of Harvard University, and brother of Elder Robert Royce of Eramosa, written in 1879 to his sister, Mrs. Hall of Everton, reads: "I think Everton village where you live is situated on Mr. Oliphant's farm; if so I have seen the site as I helped to move Mr. Oliphant's sons, Alexander and William from Dundas to the old forest farm. We arrived there on Saturday afternoon. The clearing was only six acres chopped. The bush and logs covered this. Wm. Elliot and Edward Glenon were with us. We camped out for supper and partook of speckled trout that we caught in the river at Everton. All five of us retired for the night in a log cabin just big enough to hold us, which was covered with bark. During the night, a thunder-storm came on. The rain poured down on our defenceless bodies. We were wet, wet. When daylight came we crawled out in sorry plight. Wm. Oliphant and I left next morning for better fare and found it at the house of good Elder Black. Mrs. Black very kindly cared for us."

The Oliphants must have had a rough time of it during those early days. They would have fared still worse if they had not been blessed with wonderful neighbours, the Blacks. Mr. Black, known always as Elder James Black, had been a Scotch Baptist



and a school teacher in Scotland and had come out to the Talbot colony to teach. Not liking the despotic atmosphere there he moved to Eramosa in 1829. He was married to a New England woman, wise in the ways of pioneer life and equally beloved as her husband.

Mr. Black was a very intelligent man with an extraordinary knowledge of the Scriptures and it used to be said of him that if all the Bibles in the world were lost he could have rewritten it from memory. Mrs. Black was also an extraordinary person. She was a fine cook and cooked dainty meals and taught the countryside, including the Oliphants, all the pioneer lore she had brought with her from New England. She had nine sons and spun and wove and tailored for them. She scrubbed her floors every day. Mrs. Scott had unbounded admiration for her and said of her, in her own witty way, that she could shear the sheep, spin the wool, weave it and make it into garments for her ten men before the sheep had stopped shivering.

While the Black men were helping the Oliphant men to break the forest Mrs. Black was no doubt teaching the two women the household arts and crafts necessary to existence. She would show them how to make tallow candles - which were used only on grand occasions. Ordinarily a rag dipped in fat in a saucer sufficed and later the tin cruisie with a spout and a rag, though many people had only the light of the fire. She would show them too, no doubt, how to salt down pork and beef, beans and peas - how to make butter and cheese and smoke hams and make tea and coffee from herbs and bark of trees and how to spin. I never heard of the Oliphants weaving, but one of Sophia Oliphant's hobbies in her old age was to make wonderful quilts - white with red designs of baskets of fruit etc. on them. Mother could remember her father mending their shoes but their weaving was done at the Mortons after '45, and she could remember a tailor in the village sitting cross-legged on a table assisted by his daughter. But those amenities of course came later.

The Oliphants having been followers in Scotland of the Haldanes, must have had much intellectually in common with the Blacks, and as the only diversions of the countryside in those days, outside of the tavern with which they had no dealings, was religious discussion, they must have spent many a happy evening together searching the Scriptures and coming to a common basis for the establishment of a place and mode of worship.

In these discussions, Sophia, no doubt, could hold her own. Mr. Hugh Black (son of Elder Black and father of the late Mrs. Amos Tovell of Guelph) remembered her well and said she was a woman of fine intellect and ability and would have made a good public speaker. She could express herself ably and fluently in mordant Scotch. She had a keen sense of humour, a fund of stories and was very bright, but had a severe eye and set a very



high standard for four lively young people to live up to.

The young people of these families must have been deeply imbued with the doctrinal discussions for after the death of their elders they carried the torch with unflagging zeal.

To James Black more than any other one person was due the simplification and organization of their beliefs based on New Testament teaching. It would take a book (and there are already many) to write the history of this religious movement. It is significant of the times, however, that it broke out almost simultaneously in Scotland, Ireland, Ontario and the southern States, and in time most of these groups whose beliefs were almost identical, and who had been ejected from the established churches for their advanced views, amalgamated into one "brotherhood" called the Disciples of Christ.

The result of the agreement on "first principles" in Eramosa was the building of a log church on the corner of the Black farm and to this little log church all our Eramosa ancestors adhered and became strong pillars in it, first the Oliphants, then the Stewarts and latest, the Kilgours and Mortons.

This "brotherhood" dominated the countryside, other "meeting-houses" being built later on the Parkinson farm and the Robert Royce farm, all three joining in the '50's to build the stone church in Everton on the Oliphant property. The Presbyterians and Methodists had a thin time of it in the district. Of the latter, Sophia Oliphant had a poor opinion and did not think it right to allow the children to attend their meetings.

David Oliphant was in politics a Reformer. In an old paper I found this bit: "Samuel Lount in 1837 after the abortive rebellion and after spending two nights in the woods, found shelter and comfort for one night at the farm of David Oliphant, a sympathizer."

In 1834, death struck at the Oliphant family, taking the oldest son, Alexander, then 24 years of age. He was said to have been of a brilliant and inventive turn of mind, very bright and a great favourite. Wm. Elliot said he was one of the cleverest men he had ever known. He was to have been married in two weeks, and when he died had a house built ready to move into.

The second child, Mary, was married in 1832 to William Elliot, born in Hampstead, London, in 1812, the same year as his wife. They were both twenty when married. William Elliot was a cabinet maker and made the corner cupboard which I now possess. They lived in a cabin on a farm nearby and had a hard struggle. There, their three oldest children were born - Robert, Sophia and Mary (Minnie). Aunt Mary Elliot was lame and walked with a crutch but was very quick and active and could accomplish more



with a crutch than most people could without one. She was bright and lively, very good-looking and a great talker. She always saw the ridiculous side of things and could tell a good story. After their second child was born Wm. Elliot went to Dundas to work as a drug clerk in order to pay off a debt contracted by his father. This, his daughter, Mrs. Scott, said was the best day's work he ever did as he would never have made a farmer. His wife was left alone in Eramosa for some time. One night a pack of howling wolves came close to the little shanty. She barred and barricaded the doors and windows and heaped wood on the fire. She joined her husband, later, in Dundas and he became associated with a druggist and started a firm under the name of Elliot and Thornton. From Dundas they went to Toronto (still in the thirties) and there prospered greatly and became the rich relatives of the family. Wm. Elliot joined the Lyman firm. The latter had a big wholesale drug business in Montreal and Toronto and the Toronto firm became Lyman, Elliot & Company.

Mother said her Aunt Mary was very elegant and well dressed. She was very keen and enterprising and had as good a business head as her husband and had worked hard in Dundas to help him. In later years one of her favourite ways of making money for the Mission box was to smuggle in gloves on their return from trips to Europe and sell them to her friends.

Just when the old stone house in Everton was built I do not know. It must have been before 1841, as in that year William, the second son, brought his bride Ann Stewart there. A wing had been built for the "old folks", two rooms on the east side, and there David Oliphant, never a very robust man, died at the age of 63.

Over the marriage of William Oliphant and Ann Stewart there lingers after more than 100 years the odour of romance. When out chopping or at a barn-raising William broke his leg and was carried to the Stewart place and was kept there till he was able to get about. We can picture him waited on by the sweet and gentle Ann. At any rate, they were married in 1841, he 27, she 22.

They lived in the stone house which was quite a mansion for those days and great grandmother Oliphant alternated between there and the Elliot house in Dundas. After the Elliots moved to Toronto she made her home mostly in Everton.

We have the deed of a grant of land made out to Sophia Oliphant in 1843, as widow of David Oliphant, grantee of the Crown, and another deed of partition in 1844 when Sophia Oliphant divided this land amongst her three children. William, the oldest son with whom she was living, got the house and buildings and 100 acres (the worst part of the land) on which the house stood. Mary got the next 50 acres towards the Eramosa Road, and David the 50 acres reaching to the Guelph road on which is now the church and cemetery.



William bought 20 acres more, to round out his part and worked desperately hard to redeem it from its rocks and swamp. He was a very industrious, ambitious man of high character and ability. He was tall and fine-looking and everyone who ever knew him spoke of him in the highest terms as an outstanding man. With his ambition and capacity he would probably have gone far if he had lived. Like his mother, he seems to have left a deep impression on his family and on the countryside. Eighty years after his death I asked one neighbour, Mrs. Anderson, if she remembered him and the tears sprang into her old eyes. "Oh, I mind William Oliphant as well as I mind my own father - a nice man he was, always pleasant and mild-mannered and what he said you could rely on."

Into the fifteen years between his marriage and death he crowded a busy, happy and useful life. Though the oldest child was only 14 when he died, all four retained the most profound respect and devotion for his memory. Mother said she never remembered a cross or scolding word from him. He was always bright and cheery but one glance was enough to enforce instant obedience. His wife and children adored him but also stood a little in awe of him.

He seems to have been a man of deep piety (as all our ancestors were) but a bright and lively companion, always singing or whistling, telling the children stories and reading to them. He played the flute and was anxious to teach the children how to sing and was greatly delighted when they got to the stage of carrying a tune. As Mother remembered him he was tall, fair of skin and blue of eye, with dark straight hair and fine nose and mouth. To her he was very good-looking though he had not so good features as his sister Mary. Both he and his brother were supposed to look like their mother.

Besides working very hard on the farm, he had a lime-kiln and he bought a threshing machine and took it about to other farms during the winter. He was also township clerk and treasurer from 1846 to 1855. (From Reminiscences of County of Wellington by W.F. MacKenzie - Guelph Mercury July 17, 1906 - William Oliphant was an early settler on lot 12, Con. 6, East half and was township clerk from 1846 to the end of 1855 when he was compelled to resign owing to a serious illness of which he died.) He had plans for making fine furniture for the house from the cherry and walnut trees on the place. He seems to have been able to manage people and though sensitive never lost his sunny temper or mildness of manner. Aunt Margaret Sunter was supposed to resemble him in both looks and disposition while Mother looked like his brother David.

In the early Spring of 1856 in the midst of a life bounding with health and spirits and plans and ambitions he was struck down by a mysterious, slow, fatal malady. The first symptom was a sudden fall on the floor followed by a curious spasm. From



this time he was never well although he went about. The doctors searched in vain for a clue. They tried to trace it to a fall or blow on the head which he had got at a barn-raising and they applied leaches to the back of his neck. Doctors Howitt and Parker came out from Guelph constantly to visit him, but he gradually wasted away. He did not suffer particularly, but every once in awhile (the intervals growing shorter towards the end) he had the curious spasms - often beginning in the quivering of a foot and spreading like an ague over the whole body and ending in unconsciousness. After it was over he would be very weak and exhausted. When Mother - who was barely 13 at this time - described these symptoms to Dr. Tom McCrae seventy years later he at once diagnosed the trouble as a brain tumour brought about no doubt by the accident.

(So much for the memories of a little girl related in her old age.)

He suffered patiently and uncomplainingly. Mother remembered her grandmother bending silently over this adored son, looking, looking, looking, and Uncle John Stewart used to come in daily and weep like a child.

He died in September 1856, mourned by the whole community. To many his death meant the loss of a revered friend and adviser. To his young wife and little children it was an immeasurable tragedy.

Uncle John Stewart drew up the will and tied it up so securely that it took two generations of heirs and lawyers to undo the knots.

Although great grandmother Oliphant lived only six months after her son, she too left an indelible impression on the little family left rudderless, and on the surrounding countryside. To this day, all over Eramosa and Erin can be found Sophias and Davids and Williams named after the original namesakes of the Oliphants.

Sophia Oliphant was a little woman, bright and full of energy, a fluent talker and a very strong positive personality and of stern Puritan piety. The little Oliphant children were brought up in the fear of the Lord and their grandmother. No decorative or superfluous language or slang expressions were permitted. Mother used to think it would be risqué but delightful to be able to say "goodness" or "gracious". No flower or gay ribbon was allowed on the little girls' hats however much they yearned for them - not even a lace edge on their panties, though their indulgent mother would have enjoyed spoiling them to that extent.

They never celebrated Christmas in any way that savoured of Papery - never had anything special to eat on that day and no presents. When they were quite little Mother remembered getting a string of beads (wonderful things!) in a box at New Years from Aunt Ann Stewart (Uncle John's second wife) and a party on New



Years Day for the young people at Uncle John's. Also once being driven to the English Toltons for a Christmas dinner, a huge feast, the like of which they had never seen, with 14 or 15 sitting down to the tables. But even Grandmother used to make them especially nice rag dolls and toy rabbits and strung beads for them - surely a feminine inconsistency! Great Grandmother herself was always neat and dainty with her brown cashmere dress, spotless kerchief round her neck and white cap with its fluted frill (it was the young Sophia's particular task to iron and flute these frills). She could never abide any show or affectation. At one time they had a black hired man, Jim Jones. He got a letter from home announcing the birth of a baby brother born dead. The next Sunday when he issued forth to drive them to church he was adorned with a long streamer of black crepe floating from his hat. An agonized gasp of suppressed mirth went through the family and then the grandmother quickly recovering herself sent him off crestfallen to remove his grandeur.

She was a great reader and used to clip out all amusing anecdotes and stories from the papers and paste them in a scrap-book and in the evening she would teach the hired boys their letters, read to them and give them verses to learn. This scrap-book provided all the light literature of the house.

She kept her own rooms and woe betide anyone who disturbed anything. Mother often wanted to fix up Grandmother's room and make it look up-to-date but the slightest alteration was immediately rectified and things put back as they were.

She was very fond of little David, her "idle whuppie". She had named him after her husband in the old Scotch custom. As soon as she saw him after he was born she said, "His name shall be David". Little David filled her wood-box and she taught him his lessons, he sitting on a stool beside her while she sewed or knitted, and many a rap on the head with her thimble he got for inattention. But she no doubt did her share of spoiling.

Mother could not remember her ever doing any housework but she was very fond of her garden and worked amongst her borders till she was tired. Indoors she occupied herself making her red and white quilts and she was often away on errands of mercy in times of sickness or trouble.

Whoever did the housekeeping in those early days must have been a busy person and I can see my own little Grandmother slipping about quickly and ceaselessly, running her big establishment. Picture the large rambling house, babies coming in quick succession - in busy times two hired men and a girl, all to be fed from the open fire-place and Dutch oven. Besides that all the clothing (grey home-spun) to be spun and made up, and the children's white stockings to be knit, and all the hundred and one departments to be attended to. No wonder the fire-place was the centre of the family life. Here the bread was baked in an iron bake kettle resting on a hot-bed of coals with an iron lid and more hot coals on top of



that (and enough made for Uncle Peter who baked it, on his farm on the next line and used to ride over twice a week and fill his saddle-bag with fresh bread). And here the soup pot boiled on a crane over the fire and the frying done in a long-handled frying pan. Later on they got a brick oven outside and long before William Oliphant's death they acquired the luxury of a real stove. That was a gala day in the family life.

Around the big table, the whole family - hired help, visitors, the itinerant shoemaker who made shoes for the whole family, and the chance wayfarer - gathered at mealtime. This happy patriarchal life ended with the death first of William Oliphant and then his mother.

Sophia Oliphant died at the age of 74 in March 1857, just six months after her son, after a short illness of a week or so - a bad cold, probably pneumonia - and she just slipped away. Mrs. Abbott, aunt of Dr. W.O. Stewart, was visiting her at the time. When the tea hour came, Great Grandmother said, "Go away and have your tea. I'll be all right." Mrs. Abbott said to one of the family, "I don't think I'll leave your grandmother." A few minutes later she quietly died.

Before going on with the history of the young Oliphants left so tragically bereaved by the death of father and grandmother, we shall go back and pick up the story of David, the youngest of the children of David and Sophia Oliphant.

He was seven years younger than his brother William and must very early have turned his thoughts from farming to preaching. His daughter Mary says that he commenced preaching at the age of 21 (1841 or 1842) after graduating from Bethany, Alexander Campbell's college in Virginia. But in 1843 there is an agreement of copartnership drawn up between the brothers to work their farms together and divide the profits equally. His farming career was short for in 1845 he was at Picton publishing a religious paper, "The Witness of Truth". He must still have had some idea of keeping the farm for another document shows him buying his sister Mary's 50 acres, in 1848. The lure of the spoken and written word, however, must have finally won over the dull business of farming - or perhaps publishing was a more expensive luxury than he counted on, for he finally sold his farm and for the rest of his life devoted himself to the propagation by word and pen of the more controversial aspects of Disciple doctrine. He was a great student and follower of Alexander Campbell and a "stickler for the word". While in the States he married a beautiful and lovely woman, Cynthia Mason, beloved and admired by everyone, even her in-laws.

On his return to Canada he began to preach as an Evangelist. In 1845, as we have seen, he started his journalistic career and these two occupations filled the remainder of his days. In 1848 or 49 he moved to Oshawa and in addition to preaching and publishing his religious paper, he started a secular newspaper at



the urgent request of the people. It was called in good Victorian style, "The Literary News Letter and Friendly Moralist", and later the "Oshawa Reformer". In politics he was an ardent reformer and was urged several times to take civic offices and run for M.P.P. for his county (Brighton).

He took preaching trips as far as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and New York State and nearly broke down with overwork, so gave up the secular newspaper. He continued his religious monthly under the successive names of "Witness of Truth", "Christian Banner" and "Banner of Faith" up to about 1870. During these years his wife was a devoted co-worker, "self-sacrificing, talented, sympathizing, patient, graceful". A letter of condolence after her death by a former printing apprentice of David Oliphant's describes her as "his guiding-star during his long absence from home. Never was there a lovelier woman - her angelic presence with frequent admonitions kept me from going astray and never while reason lasts will she ever be forgotten by me."

They lived in Brighton for some years where a street was named after them. He did much for the town but refused all offices and emoluments.

In 1873, his first wife having died, he married a Miss Eusebia Vining, a teacher in London and "an estimable lady". For the last twelve years of his life from 1873-85 he lived in or near London and his wife went on teaching.

"He will be remembered by those who knew him personally for the "gentleness and courtesy of his demeanor, for his dignity, culture, love of knowledge and by those who knew him only through his public labours" as a sound and polished writer, an able debater and an earnest teacher."

By one young niece he was remembered as very argumentative and sarcastic and a disturbing element in their peaceful home. She remembered him tall and rather homely (with what we mistakenly call the Oliphant features, short nose and long upper lip. The Oliphants were good-looking. These features that cropped out in David Oliphant, his daughter Maria and niece Sophia, must have come from elsewhere - the Watts?).

There were three daughters by the first marriage - Maria, Sophia and Calista Ann. The oldest was a teacher most of her life, plain, early-Victorian and elegant and ceremonious in her manner. Sophia, whom, as Mrs. McDougal, I once met in London, was pretty with charming, friendly manners. She had been partly brought up with the Elliots who helped these Oliphants a good deal. Calista Ann, who, according to E.E. Sheppard, was a lovely and beautiful young girl, died of smallpox in pretty grim circumstances while keeping house for her father.

By the second marriage there was one daughter, Mary, who held an important secretarial position in Detroit for many years and



still lives there, retired. She and my cousin, Florence Oliphant (as of December 1958) are the only two Oliphants of the name left of the descendants of David and Sophia Watt Oliphant.

And now we must return to the little family bereft of their two strong supports and disciplinarians and the heart-broken young woman, not yet forty, tender-hearted, gentle, indulgent and clinging, left to cope with the upbringing of the four young children and the care of a difficult and unwilling farm. Enter Uncle John Stewart. Uncle John loved coping with situations and managing people's affairs for them. He had already tied Grandfather's will into a hundred knots. Now he decided that his brother Peter, a bachelor with no special responsibilities and with a very good farm on the next line, should trade his farm for the Oliphant poor one and should go and live with his sister Ann and manage both farms. He also thought it would be a good idea if he sent their old mother, who had lived on with him on the original Stewart homestead after her husband's death, over to live with daughter Ann. "She would be company for her" and no doubt it simplified his own household already complicated enough with a second wife and two high-spirited daughters. Great Grandmother Stewart, born in 1779, was already 78 when she went to live with the Oliphants and gradually became more and more difficult and childish. But her daughter Ann was devoted to her and cared for her with unending tenderness and patience for twenty years.

The young Oliphants had at least a good schooling in the ways of old people. Their grandmother Stewart achieved a great age but Uncle Peter (only 45 or 46 at that time) was born old. Neither of them had the insight, control or the brains of the Oliphants. All three Stewarts were deeply pious and affectionate, but I am sure it did not take long for the four fun-loving children to find out how they could manage them and dodge the consequences of their misdeeds. Mother used to tell of her mother plaintively calling them in from play to do the dishes and, after a perfunctory dash in to their duties and dash out again, another call coming, "Margaret, Sophia and Ann come back and finish your work. You've left every pot, dish, kettle and pan in the house dirty." No story could be more illuminating of the changed upbringing of the children. In their father's and grandmother Oliphant's day no child ever had to be asked twice to do a thing.

It is impossible to guess what different characters and lots these four bright and winsome young people would have had if their father had lived. That they would have been different is certain.

The three girls were pretty, Margaret, the eldest, exceptionally so, and considered the beauty of the countryside. All, especially the youngest, Annie, had an extraordinary sense of the ridiculous and power of mimicry. They could rattle through the long oath administered by their father to the township workers - "You declare that herein is correct...", and could talk rugged Scotch like the Richardsons, Highland like the Thomsons, Irish



like the Talbots and broad Yorkshire like the Pleweses. All oddities were grist to their mill. They took naturally to the refinements of life introduced by the elegant Elliot kin and their Aunt Ann Stewart (Uncle John's second wife who was the daughter of a ship-builder). They were always neat and well-dressed (and probably now got lace on their panties) and when Margaret, who resembled her father and Sophia who looked a little like her Uncle David, used to pass the Talbots on their way to school, Auntie Margaret would call out "There come William and David Oliphant as neat and pretty as new pins".

Little David, born three years after the girls, was the pet of the family - handsome, sweet, dreamy and utterly impractical, he, especially, suffered the lack of a firm guiding hand.

And so they grew up, adored and indulged by their mother, scolded by their grandmother, preached at by Uncle Peter, and grew into very charming and attractive young people. It is hard not to idealize the past a bit, especially about one's own mother, but from the unprejudiced account of contemporaries, cousins and admirers they seem to have justified the admiration they drew and perhaps to have earned the description of the "upppish Oliphants". They certainly seem to have been turned out of a finer mould than many of the settlers of that day. The Elliots visited them every summer and they returned the visits. Aunt Margaret had a term at a boarding school in Guelph and Aunt Annie too I think. Mother was sent to a "Female Seminary" in Dundas. All these contacts added to their innate refinement and love of having everything "nice".

Margaret, the oldest, was as lovely in disposition as she was in face. She was sweet-tempered and kind and had a good head and was fitted by nature to grace any situation.

Mother was more satirical and fastidious. Both she and Aunt Annie must have led their admirers a dance. Neither Mother nor Aunt Annie had orderly or well-trained minds but they were quick-witted and intuitive. They were as unstable as summer breezes and could never be pinned down. When you thought you had them perfectly persuaded to a course of action, by morning they had completely slithered round and you had it all to do over again. They were most exasperating and inconsistent but very delightful companions.

David was intended by nature to be a retired gentleman with a good income and a good steward to look after his affairs. He was shy, a great reader and utterly impractical. The coarse necessity of money-making was utterly repulsive to him and remained so all his life. All he asked of life was a modest competence and leisure to devote himself to Shakespeare. Uncle William Elliot took him early in hand, trained him in the drug business (at which time he lived in the Elliot home and wasn't very happy) and finally set him up in his own drug business in Collingwood. But he never changed his spots.



In the meantime Uncle John awoke to the fact that he had three very marriageable young nieces and that the young men were buzzing round them. He imported from Toronto at least two very eligible and willing young men and practically commanded the nuptials. But this was too much for high-spirited girls, too much even for their gentle little mother who was righteously indignant for once in her life and the suitors returned to Toronto and the girls chose their own young men and, true to form, picked them struggling and impecunious.

Margaret married Alex Sunter who had a farm in the neighbourhood. They shortly sold it and bought another back of Meaford, a long way off in those days, moving there in February, 1871. He later gave up farming and they moved to Meaford where he edited and published the weekly Monitor for many years. They had seven daughters who grew up - Annie Louise, Ellen (Duggan), Sophia, Margaret (Stewart), Bertha and Edna who died in her late 'teens about 1901. Louie, Sophie, Margaret and Bertha live together now (as of December, 1952) in Meaford.

Sophia married John Kilgour and they started life together in Hillsburg where John kept a general store. Their first baby, William Oliphant, died when a few months old. Mother was very ill after the baby's birth with a spinal abscess. She and the baby were nursed by Grandma Oliphant in the old home in Everton, attended by several doctors - one from Toronto. The second child, James Frederick, was born in Hillsburg and it was in Hillsburg that the young Kilgour couple became such friends of the Meldrum family. Mr. Meldrum was a druggist there.

From Hillsburg they moved to Guelph, living in a little house on Grandfather Kilgour's lot till they built their own two doors away, in the early eighties. There they lived till the end of their lives. Annie, Errett and Edith were born in Guelph.

Annie Oliphant married Albert Tolton, a miller, and they had five children - Annie (Moir), Stewart, Ethel (Ward), Floy (Holland) and Margaret.

They lived in Hamilton for many years then moved to Thorndale and both died in London within a few months of each other.

Floy Holland, the last survivor of that family, died in Ottawa in 1955.

David Oliphant married Alice Hogg of Collingwood and they had five children - Lena, Mrs. Howard Baker of Edmonton, Clara, Mrs. Darcy Bell, Collingwood, Sophie, Mrs. Dick Wilson and Florence, the last of the name, Toronto, and Stewart who died without leaving any family during the last war. David Oliphant died in Toronto at the home of his daughters January 29, 1932, and his wife three months later.